

Dear President Bush:

Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's Law. I have learned a great deal from you, and try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When someone tries to defend the homosexual lifestyle, for example, I simply remind them that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination... End of debate. I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some other elements of God's Laws and how to follow them...

- 1. Leviticus 25:44 states that I may possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighboring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can't I own Canadians?**
- 2. I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?**
- 3. I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of menstrual uncleanness - Lev.15: 19-24. The problem is how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.**
- 4. When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord - Lev.1:9. The problem is, my neighbors. They claim the odor is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them?**
- 5. I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself, or should I ask the police to do it?**
- 6. A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination - Lev. 11:10, it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this? Are there 'degrees' of abomination?**
- 7. Lev. 21:20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/20, or is there some wiggle-room here?**
- 8. Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Lev. 19:27. How should they die?**
- 9. I know from Lev. 11:6-8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, but may I still play football if I wear gloves?**
- 10. My uncle has a farm. He violates Lev. 19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton/polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them? (Lev. 24:10-**

16). Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair, as we do with people who sleep with their in-laws? (Lev. 20:14)

I appreciate the dear lady who sent those passages, because those passages are indeed the very Word of God, and we are charged to be good students of the Bible (Psalm 1; 2 Tim 2:15) that we might come to a correct understanding of God's Holy, infallible, inerrant written Word. She appealed to President Bush for some help concerning those passages, and obviously, I am not President Bush. However, since it is most improbable that the President will respond to her (I don't think the President makes it a habit of responding to every person who writes him letter), I thought I might try to set forth a reply that might help her with her concerns.

As noted, the passages are indeed the Word of God. As the Apostle Paul tells us, "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...*" (2 Tim 3:16). Since that is true, and God's Word is, as Jesus said, "truth" (John 17:17), we certainly do not want to misrepresent what the Word of God teaches. To do so not only misinforms people, but also offends an infinitely Holy God. My hope is that the dear lady who sent those passages has the same concerns. One thing that became clear though by the comments related to the passages was that there is great confusion and misunderstanding concerning those passages. My prayer is that what I set forth here might help alleviate some of the confusion.

To deal with those passages accurately, there are a few things that need to be addressed. First, if we really believe in the God of the Bible, we must acknowledge that all of those passages are true (though the comments provided by our friend are not quite accurate). The God of the universe really did command and/or provide for the things contained in the passages. In other words, they were real commands and provisions given to a specific people at a particular time in history to reveal definite truths concerning the nature of God. Ultimately those passages, and all of Scripture for that matter, set before us the fact that God is the absolute Holy and Sovereign King of the universe who does and commands whatsoever He pleases, and as such He requires absolute, perfect obedience to everything He says.

Second, when coming to any document, we must be able to read it for all its worth. This means that we must make sure that we are adhering to commonly held principles of how to come to a correct understanding of any document that we read, whether it is the daily newspaper, the writings of Plato, Shakespeare, a novel, or the Bible. The technical term used to describe this is "hermeneutics." We must consider a broad range of factors, such as the setting (i.e., who are the characters involved, what is the historical context, what is the cultural context, etc.), the genre (what kind of literature is it? Is it poetry, historical narrative, etc.) grammar, the correct meaning of words and/or concepts, textual context (i.e., not drawing a conclusion from one portion of a text while ignoring other things in the text that have a direct bearing on the conclusion), harmony in the parts (ensuring that all of the various parts fit together in a coherent whole), etc.

One might think this is a lot of stuff to do just to make sure that we understand a document, however, all of the things I just mentioned could all be summed by saying that we

must employ commonsense when we read any document and endeavor to come to an understanding of it. What I mean by that is that it seems most people do those things almost automatically when they read their morning newspaper, or a good novel, etc. Unfortunately, for some mystifying reason, many people then completely abandon one or more of those principles when they approach the Bible. When we are not faithful to the principles mentioned above, we will end up not understanding the message and/or giving a completely false rendering of what the document is saying. To illustrate this point, let's say you are reading a novel with 10 chapters. Can you imagine reading only the first chapter of that novel, and then providing a commentary on what the entire novel was about? *Nobody* does that. We know that all of the chapters have bearing on one another, and in order to have a correct understanding of the entire novel, we need to read the *entire* novel. Very often something contained in the first chapter doesn't quite make sense until we get to the final chapter. Or, let's take the point of textual context. Suppose you read the following:

“Adolph Hitler was an extremely resourceful and charismatic leader. Much can be learned by his example. What we learn is that absolute power corrupts absolutely, and any “civilized” culture can be driven to acts of unspeakable evil when a resourceful, charismatic, and in Hitler’s case, maniacal leader holds power.”

Now, let's suppose we stopped reading at the first two sentences: “*Adolph Hitler was an extremely resourceful and charismatic leader. Much can be learned by his example...*” One might get the impression that the author here had admiration for Hitler, and that his example *should* be followed. However, that would be an incorrect conclusion and a misrepresentation of the author's *thought*, because we would be lifting those statements out of the context of the rest of the things that the author says. When we consider the whole context, an entirely different conclusion is reached, and the *true meaning* of the author is discovered. One may think that this is an exaggerated example, however, I can assure the reader, this happens very frequently, especially when dealing with the Bible. Many people will often lift one verse out of its context, and then say, “The Bible teaches...” Then consider that we must also understand how any given text fits into the broader context of all of the other texts in the Bible, and we see that great care must be given to our conclusions. Much, much more could be said with regard to this, but I will trust that the point has been sufficiently made.

Based on what I've said so far, there are two presuppositions and assertions that I am proceeding on: 1) The passages mentioned are indeed the Word of God, and 2) We must read that Word for all it is worth. With these two things in mind, I would like to respectfully set forth a reply.

The Passages Mentioned are the Word of God

For this first assertion we must answer/establish four things:

1. Does God exist?
2. How do I know He exists?
3. How do I know that the God of the Bible is that God?

4. How do I know that the Bible is the Word of God?

Needless to say, much can be, and has been written in response to those things in the course of history. It is not my intention to go into a detailed analysis here, but to merely give a brief answer to each one because it is foundational to answering the concerns of our friend.

Does God Exist?

The presupposition of the Bible right from the start is that God exists, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...*” (Gen 1:1). There is no argument advanced to prove the existence of God, just a proclamation that He does, and that He is the one who created the universe. Not only does the Bible proceed on the presupposition of God’s existence, I would argue that it is also the fundamental presupposition that every single person has, even the atheist. Now, the atheist may vehemently object that his fundamental presupposition is that God exists, but I believe he does so in vain. Consider the following things:

1. The Innate Nature of the Knowledge God – all of humanity has an innate awareness of the existence of God and the eternal. There are at least two places in Scripture that speak to this fact. The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that God “*has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end...*” (Eccl 3:11). In Romans chapters 1-3, the Apostle Paul touches on various things that illuminate the fact of God’s existence: creation (chap 1), conscience (chapter 2), and finally Christ (chapter 3). The first two things (creation and conscience), which are known to every person, have been described by theologians as “general revelation.” Of this general revelation, theologian Louis Berkhof says,

“It does not come to man in the form of verbal communications, but in the facts, the forces, and the laws of nature, in the constitution and operation of the human mind, and in the facts of experience and history.” (Berkhof, 1938, Summary of Christian Doctrine. This classic can be read on line at: <http://www.mbrem.com/shorttakes/berk.htm>)

The other form of revelation is “special revelation,” which comes to us in the written Word of God, and ultimately the person of Christ. Berkhof again is extremely helpful:

“The Bible is preeminently the book of God’s special revelation, a revelation in which facts and words go hand in hand, the words interpreting the facts and the facts giving substance to the words.... The highest point of the personal appearance of God among men was reached in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In Him the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, John 1:14...(Berkhof, 1938, Summary of Christian Doctrine. <http://www.mbrem.com/shorttakes/berk.htm>)

The importance of special revelation cannot be overstated. In the comments below, Berkhof hits on why special revelation is absolutely necessary, and these comments actually lay the groundwork for much that I will be discussing later in terms of the progressive nature of the revelation of redemption found in the Bible:

“This special revelation of God is a *revelation of redemption*. It reveals the plan of God for the redemption of sinners and of the world, and the way in which this plan is realized. It is instrumental in renewing man; it illumines his mind and inclines his will to that which is good; it fills him with holy affections, and prepares him for his heavenly home. Not only does it bring us a message of redemption; it also *acquaints us with redemptive facts*. It not only enriches us with knowledge, but also transforms lives by changing sinners into saints. *This revelation is clearly progressive*. The great truths of redemption *appear but dimly at first*, but gradually *increase in clearness*, and finally *stand out in the New Testament in all their fullness and beauty*.” (Berkhof, 1938, Summary of Christian Doctrine; emphasis mine
<http://www.mbrem.com/shorttakes/berk.htm>)

Please note with great care the phrases I emphasized in Berkhof’s statement above. This really lays at the heart of our friend’s confusion on the passages she sent.

In short, general revelation is enough to demonstrate the existence of God, and make all people inexcusable before God, but it is not enough to produce a saving knowledge of God. This is why we need special revelation, whereby God condescends to us and reveals to us precisely who He is and what He requires in order for us to have a relationship with Him.

Creation and Conscience

For now, I want to turn my attention to the general revelations of creation and conscience and why it is so important. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 1:18-21 that,

“men... suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (Rom 1:18-21)

This passage is significant. Notice that the fact of God’s existence is self-evident due to the awesome wonder of creation itself, but men suppress that knowledge in *unrighteousness*. In other words, they clearly understand that God exists, but because they want to live their own lives their own way, they refuse to submit to that knowledge. They do everything they can to get

God out of their thinking, going so far as to worship the creation instead of the Creator, that they might be able to gratify their sinful lusts, and even exchange natural relations for unnatural ones, i.e., they reject heterosexuality for homosexuality (see the rest of chapter 1). I will speak more on that particular issue a bit later.

In Romans chapter 2, Paul speaks of the conscience of mankind. Paul tells us that even though many other people (Gentiles) who had/have no knowledge of the special revelation of God (His Word/Law and Christ) that was given to the Jews nevertheless,

“...by nature do the things in the law...who show the work of the law written in their hearts, *their conscience also bearing witness...*” (Rom 2: emphasis mine)

This calls attention to other matters that will be addressed later, such as the universal knowledge of absolute moral values (right and wrong), etc. For now, notice that every person has a sense of right and wrong, and this is something that is engraved upon their conscience.

Thus, it is not too much to say that the most basic, fundamental presupposition common to every man is that God exists. The 16th century Protestant theologian John Calvin noted,

“There is within the human mind, indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity...to prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God Himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of His divine majesty...Since, therefore, men one and all perceive that there is a God and that He is their Maker, they are condemned by their own testimony because they have failed to honor Him and consecrate their lives to His will.” (John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book I, Chapter III, pp. 43-44).

The problem isn't that people do not know that God exists. Every person everywhere knows that God exists, even those who claim to be “atheists.” People simply refuse to submit to that knowledge because they want to live their lives according to the dictates of their own will (they want to do whatever they want to do without anyone, God included, telling them what to do, or that what they are doing is wrong).

2. The Necessary Presupposition – this means that every person lives their life *presupposing* that the God of the Bible exists. How? Because only the God of the Bible gives us the necessary basis upon which to account for such things as knowledge, rationality, logic, science, morality, wisdom, perfection, value, right and wrong, true and false, good and evil, and even reality itself—things that we all take for granted.

For example, every time someone gives a moral imperative, such as “you ought to do _____” or “it is wrong to do _____” they are borrowing from the Christian worldview, because they are presupposing (or, taking it for granted) that there are such things as absolute and universal standards of right and wrong (I will speak more on the issue of morality as well).

Or, take science. Our ability to do any kind of science is dependent upon a number of factors, one of the most important of which is the uniformity and predictability of nature. This means that we presuppose that the universe is governed by a principle of order. Were it not for that order and/or uniformity in nature, science itself would be impossible. The only way to account for that unity and order is to presuppose the existence of a Mind that designed and sustains the unity and order we see, because just plain matter is incapable of bringing about order. And one cannot posit an impersonal force of some kind (e.g., “natural selection”) as the thing that exerts influence on matter to ensure that order is brought about, because an impersonal force is just that: impersonal. It has no mind; it has no consciousness at all to even know what order *is*, and would be utterly incapable therefore of *directing* things in such a way as to bring about the order and unity we see among the “one and the many.” In order to even be able to *do* science then, one must borrow again from the Christian worldview. It is no accident that modern science traces its roots to scientists who unequivocally held to a belief in the God of the Bible, and it was Sir Isaac Newton, the father of modern science, who stated that the task of the scientist was to “*think God’s thoughts after Him.*” Logically then, the most basic and fundamental presupposition for the scientist is that God *is*. Even those scientists who do not consciously invoke God when doing science (and may even outright reject God), nevertheless, by virtue of engaging in that which can only be accounted for by presupposing the existence of God, at the very least subconsciously *are* invoking the existence of God.

I could address each of the other things I listed, but I will move on. We all take those things for granted, and live our lives on the presupposition that those things *must* be, and the only way to sufficiently account for those presuppositions is to first presuppose the existence of the God of the Bible. This quote captures the essence of all that I said above:

“The anti-theist lives as if this were God’s world, with abstract norms, regularities, standards, etc; but pouts that “he just cannot know” whether the God on whom he is utterly dependent exists or not. Nowhere to go, it’s just baffling that someone would choose beliefs that **if true** (which they’re fortunately not) would **undermine the possibility** of logic, science, and ethics. And it’s baffling that someone would so choose, all the while living as if the world were a world of meaning, standards, consciousness, and value—rather than of matter clunking chemically against impersonal matter.” (<http://radioapologia.com/index.php>)

How Do I Know That God Exists?

What people really want to know is if there is any concrete evidence to prove the existence of God. While all that I said earlier applies here, and in point of fact we could just leave it at that, there have been a number of other compelling arguments that have been advanced in the course of history to prove the existence of God. I will briefly touch on a couple of them:

1. First Cause – There have been different ways of advancing this argument. Basically, this argument is based on the law of cause and effect. The law of cause and effect

says that there cannot be an effect without a cause. The creation is an effect, and the only way to account for its existence is to posit a first cause that was itself uncaused and was sufficient to both bring it into existence and then sustain it. Some philosopher's have called this first cause of the universe "The Unmoved Mover" (Aristotle). God, as the first cause, is the unmoved mover. The question is then raised: if everything requires a cause, then where did God come from? But this question really has no logical force. For one thing, only "effects" require a cause, and God is not an "effect" but is the *Cause*. Besides this however, we all believe that something has *always* existed. There has never been a time when there was absolutely nothing, because if there were ever a time when absolutely nothing existed, the only thing that there would be now would be absolutely nothing. We know this because of one of the most basic principles of logic and science: "Ex Nihilo, Nihil Fit", which means "out of nothing, nothing comes." Obviously, the universe is something, and it could not have come from nothing..

Thus, in terms of the creation, the creation is something, and since you can't get something from nothing, and we know that something has always existed and is eternal, the only question remaining is what precisely has always existed: is it the universe that is eternal, or is there something outside of the universe that is eternal and is responsible for bringing all that we see into existence.

So is the universe eternal? Science tells us that it clearly is not. Many scientists, particularly those who speak of the big bang theory, are fond of speaking of the "beginning of the universe." If there is a beginning to something, that means there was a time when it was not. Not only do these scientists speak of the beginning of the universe, they also speak of the end of the universe. They tell us that eventually the universe will die and cease to exist—these things by definition are the exact opposite of what it means to be eternal. If there was a time when it was not, and a time when it will not be, then obviously it is not eternal. Of course, many who hold to the big bang theory have devised elaborate hypotheses (i.e., the oscillating universe theory, etc.) to explain away the necessity to posit a Creator, but they are all far from intellectually satisfying for a variety of reasons which time does not permit to explore. The fundamental question that none of them can answer is "where did all this stuff come from, what moved it, and why is there life?" For more info, see:
http://www.freenet.edmonton.ab.ca/create/articles/universe_elegant.html
<http://www.hope-of-israel.org/crunch.htm>

Many people, realizing that it is scientifically impossible that the universe has always existed and is eternal, say that the universe was self-created. That is, there was a time when there was nothing, and then somehow the universe just created itself. To say that something is self-created (i.e., that it can create itself) violates the most fundamental law of logic, the law of non-contradiction, which states that "A" cannot be "non-A" at the same time and in the same relation. In simple terms, something creating itself is a contradiction, because in order for something to create itself, it must both exist, and not exist, at the same time and in the same relationship, which is not just impossible, but is absolutely ridiculous. To say something creates itself is a non-sense statement.

Thus, the only logical accounting for the existence of the universe is a first cause that is outside of the universe that is self-existent and eternal. Some realize this point, but then say that

it is an impersonal force. Again though, that is impossible because the universe displays design, purpose, and personality. The entity that brought the universe into existence must by necessity possess the attributes of rationality, omnipotence, and I would argue holiness (because there is a sense of right and wrong in the universe). Articles for further reading:

<http://www.carm.org/apologetics/cosmological.htm> (very basic definition and presentation of the argument).

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/billramey/kalam.htm>

<http://www.arn.org/docs/koons/cosmo.pdf>

2. Design – William Paley, a 17th century clergyman is probably most famous for advancing this argument (you can read excerpts here: <http://www-phil.tamu.edu/~gary/intro/paper.paley.html>), though he was far from the first to come up with the argument. The Christian Research and Apologetics Ministry (<http://www.carm.org>) sums this argument up very nicely, “*Quite simply, it states that a designer must exist since the universe and living things exhibit marks of design in their order, consistency, unity, and pattern.*” (<http://www.carm.org/apologetics/teleological.htm>). Simply put, if there is a design, there must be a Designer. If there is a watch, there must be a watchmaker. No one stumbles upon a wristwatch in a field, looks at all of its intricate parts (hands, gears, glass/plastic casing, etc.) and then reasons that the watch just came into being by chance. Many unbelievers agree with this principle, but instead of looking to God as the Designer, some point to aliens (I’m not kidding! See here for more info: <http://www.carm.org/rael/creation.htm>). It was aliens that produced life on earth. A movie a few years ago, “Mission to Mars” postulated this very thing. In this movie, astronauts discover a structure on the surface of Mars that is shaped like a face. Interestingly, no one sets forth the hypothesis that this structure formed through chance plus time. Rather, they all realized that what they were witnessing was produced by an intelligence of some kind. They go on to discover that they were correct, and it was aliens that had created the structure. These aliens then take one of the astronauts on a whirlwind tour of how the creation of life on earth all came about (evolution and all), and lo and behold, it was these aliens that were responsible for all of that as well! Since the aliens are finite creatures though, we must ask, what brought these finite creatures into existence? You see, no matter how hard they try, the skeptic simply cannot escape the conclusion that something has always existed and is responsible for the creation.

In any event, just like the wristwatch, or even an example as cited in the movie “Mission to Mars,” we all know that things that exhibit design simply could not have come into being through chance, but through *intelligence*. The universe likewise is complex (and infinitely more so than a watch). Whether we are talking about the incredible way our universe is fine-tuned to ensure that life can even exist on earth (what some call the “Anthropic Principle”...see this article: <http://mypage.direct.ca/g/gcramer/design.html>), or the irreducible complexity of even the smallest cell (http://www.arn.org/behe/mb_articles.htm), which biologists refer to as little machines, it is clear that the only sufficient cause for the complexity of what we see is, as it has come to be called, intelligent design. For more info on Intelligent Design, see: <http://ic.net/~erasmus/RAZ15.HTM>
<http://www.arn.org/>

3. Jesus Christ – The irrefutable historical fact of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ provides the ultimate evidence for the truth that God exists. In Christ, God became man, lived a life of perfect obedience, died on the cross, was buried, and then three days later was raised from the dead in direct fulfillment of prophecy, and by His resurrection He demonstrated that He was who He said He was, and He validated His message. These articles set forth the evidence of the resurrection of Christ:

<http://www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/editors-choice/EC0302W3.htm> (this article is written by one of my professors at Liberty University, Dr. Gary Habermas. He works off of all the facts that skeptics are willing to concede, then proves the resurrection based only on those facts!)

<http://www.icr.org/bible/troc.htm>

<http://www.leaderu.com/offices/billcraig/menus/historical.html>

<http://www.leaderu.com/menus/apologetics.html> (articles on a number of issues including the resurrection)

<http://www.apuritansmind.com/Apologetics/WarfieldResurrection.htm>

<http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/num9.htm>

<http://www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/ATRI-Bible-School/Winter-Bible-School/winter-bible-school.htm>

The resurrection of Christ also answers the 2 remaining questions yet to be examined. With those in mind, let me briefly provide an answer to each one:

How do I know that the God of the Bible is in fact the one true and living God?

Ultimately, the answer to this question is because Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh, then validated His message, proved His identity, and disqualified all other contrary truth claims concerning God through the historical fact of His bodily resurrection from the dead. An empty tomb stands as a perpetual memorial and testimony to all that Jesus Christ really is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one can come to the Father except through Him (ref John 14:6), and that the God of the Bible is the one True and Living God.

How do I know that the Bible is the Word of God?

Because Jesus claimed that the Scriptures were the very Word and truth of God, and since Jesus then rose from the dead proving Himself to be God in the flesh, everything He said or taught is true. Therefore, the Scriptures are Divinely inspired and everything contained them in them is true. Here are some key points:

1. The Bible is a *proven* reliable source in all that it reports concerning persons, places, and events. This is demonstrated by the evidence from manuscript authority, archaeological evidence, predictive prophecy, statistical probabilities, the utter uniqueness of the Bible, etc. For more info, see my study here: www.geocities.com/johnandursula/resurrection

2. The Bible reports the life, ministry, and miracles of Jesus of Nazareth.
3. Jesus claimed to be God and rose from the dead validating His message.
4. Therefore, all that Jesus said and taught was true.
5. Jesus taught that the Bible was the Word of God.
6. Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God and true in all that it reports.

I have thus established that God does exist, and that the God of the Bible is in fact God, and the Bible is indeed the very Word of God. With these things established, we can move into the passages that our friend has concerns about. This means that we are now going to endeavor to do what I mentioned earlier: read the text for all that it is worth by applying all of the key principles of how to come to a correct understanding of any document that we read, whether it is the daily newspaper, the writings of Plato, Shakespeare, a novel, or the Bible, i.e., “hermeneutics.”

Understanding and Applying the Word

When approaching the Bible, we must understand the redemptive-historical nature of Scripture. Here is a definition of what that means:

Redemptive History, as a hermeneutic, focuses on ***the progressive self-revelation of God to His covenant people through the vehicle of history***. God is the sovereign Beginning and End of all things both in this world below and in heaven above. ***All things have a direction toward the consummation of God's good purposes***. The culmination of the ages is the manifestation of God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, first in humiliation to accomplish God's eternal redemption and finally in glory to consummate the Kingdom of God. To these fullnesses of time God orchestrates all of history...He foreshadows and alludes [to] the consolation of Israel throughout the Old Testament. Redemption accomplished in history, heaven having intruded the lower regions of the earth, ***Jesus Christ reigns having fulfilled the Old Testament types and shadows***. The church in the kingdom age like the nation of Israel before, is the nation of choice through which God has delighted to bless all the nations of the world. He has invested her with the means of grace, and they can be found nowhere else...As redemptive historians ***we attempt to approach the Scriptures as the progressive self-disclosure of God***. All of the Scriptures point to the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, become flesh. And ***all of the Scriptures need to be interpreted in light of His historical work, death, resurrection, and ascension***. (<http://www.two-age.org/faq.htm>).

Notice the portions that I have put in bold print and italicized. These things are crucial to coming to an understanding of Scripture. Here are the key points that I italicized above:

1. *The progressive self-revelation of God to His covenant people through the vehicle of history.*

2. *All things have a direction toward the consummation of God's good purposes.*
3. *Jesus Christ reigns having fulfilled the Old Testament types and shadows.*
4. *We attempt to approach the Scriptures as the progressive self-disclosure of God.*
5. *All of the Scriptures need to be interpreted in light of His historical work, death, resurrection, and ascension.*

As for this progressive self-revelation of God to His people, the primary way God related to His people was through covenant, which is a pact between two or more parties. We are most familiar with the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. However, within the Old Covenant, we discover a number of sub-covenants, so to speak, such as the Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Sinaitic, and Davidic Covenants. John Hendryx, director of the internet based ministry Monergism.com (www.monergism.com -- highly recommended!!!) provides this helpful quote from the work he lists immediately follow it:

“Covenant is from the Hebrew [ber-eeth] meaning to cut, and by extension means a promise or pledge to do something. "It is an agreement upon the promises concerning the relationship between two or more parties. In Biblical terms the covenant is the prime agency of God's self-revelation in history. God reveals Himself to be the covenant God. The essence of the covenant between God and man is "I will be your God, and you will be My people." The probationary covenant of life by which man was to keep God's commandments perfectly was ultimately and consummately fulfilled by Christ, God in the flesh. The covenant of grace is that by which God's elect are attributed Christ's satisfaction by faith. An understanding of the covenant is central to understanding the history of redemption. Covenant theology is that system of theology which ***recognizes the successive covenants of Scripture as a unity***, and the means by which God orders His creation and brings about redemption for His elect."

(From [Biblical Theology and Redemptive Historical Hermeneutics](#)) (emphasis mine)

Notice the portion I highlighted. We shouldn't think of these covenants as completely separate pacts with no relation to one another, rather as a unified whole whereby God's one purpose since the Fall of Adam and Eve was being progressively revealed through time, culminating in Christ and the New Covenant which now supersedes all of the previous covenants. Note: For more info on the various covenants, see:

http://upper-register.com/ct_gospel.html

<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/topic/covenants.html>

<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/topic/covenants.html>

At the risk of oversimplification, we can say that the Old Covenant (and all of its sub-covenants) foreshadowed the New Covenant and Christ. In simple terms, salvation has always been by grace alone, through faith alone, in, by, and because of Christ alone. Theologically we refer to this one plan of salvation that is revealed in the Old and New Covenants as the “Covenant of Grace.” One of the most important historic Protestant documents and statements of faith is the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). The WCF, written in the mid-17th century provides extremely helpful insight with reference to this Covenant of Grace. In Chapter 7, sections 5 and 6, the WCF states:

5. This covenant [i.e., the Covenant of Grace] was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the old Testament.

6. Under the gospel, when Christ the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances, in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper: which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet, in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament...”

As for the law itself, God sent Moses to lead His people Israel out of bondage, and in the process “*reveals His name, attributes, redemption, law, and how He is to be worshipped.*” (NIV Study Bible Introduction: Exodus, under the heading “Themes and Theology”). In the giving of His law, God revealed to us His holy character and nature, and as mentioned, gave specific instructions on how He was to be worshipped.

It should also be noted that theologians have historically pointed to a three-fold distinction within God’s law: moral, ceremonial, and civil. The moral portion of the law is what most of us are familiar with. That portion is most clearly expressed in the 10 Commandments. The ceremonial law has to do with the various ordinances that were prescribed in the worship of God. In essence, it was merely the practical application of the first 4 commandments. The civil law was designed to regulate affairs and govern the theocracy of ancient Israel, and in essence is the practical application of the last 6 commandments. All of these can be summed up by the two greatest commandments: Love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (the first 4 commandments relate to that), and love our neighbor as ourselves (the last 6 commandments relate to that).

The WCF describes for us the three-fold use of the law in chapter 19, Of the Law of God. The following quotation of chapter 19 of the WCF is a modern English version. To compare the original English with the modern English version, please go to http://www.opc.org/documents/MESV_frames.html:

1. God gave Adam a law, in the form of a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his descendants to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience. He promised life if Adam kept the law and threatened death if he broke it. Moreover, he endowed Adam with power and ability to keep that law. GEN 1:26; ROM 2:14; ROM 5:12; GAL 3:10; ECC 7:29; JOB 28:28
2. This law, after Adam fell, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness and, as such, was given by God upon Mount Sinai in Ten Commandments written on two stone tablets. The first four commandments contain our duty to God, the other six our duty to man. JAM 1:25; 2:8 –12; ROM 13:8,9 DEU 5:32;10:4; EX 24:1; MAT 22:37-40
3. In addition to this law, commonly called the moral law, God was pleased to give the people of Israel—as the church under age—ceremonial laws, which contained several typological ordinances. These ordinances consisted partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits, and partly of various instructions of moral duties. All these ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the New Testament. HEB 9; HEB 10:1; GAL 4:1-3; COL 2:17; 1CO 5:7; 2CO 6:17; JUD 23; COL 2:14-17; DAN 9:27; EPH 2:15-6
4. To the people of Israel, as a civil entity, he also gave various judicial laws which expired at the time their State expired. Therefore, these judicial laws place no obligation upon anyone now, except as they embody general principles of justice. EXO 21-22; GEN 49:10; 1PE 2:13,14; MAT 5:17, 38-39; 1CO 9:8-10
5. The moral law binds all people at all times to obedience, both those who are justified and those who are not. The obligation to obey the moral law is not only because of its content, but also because of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. In the gospel, Christ in no way dissolves this obligation, but greatly strengthens it. ROM 13:8-10; EPH 6:2; 1JO 2:3-8; JAM 2:8-10, 11; MAT 5:17-19; ROM 3:31
6. Although true believers are not under the law as a covenant of works by which they are justified or condemned, nevertheless the law is of great use to them as well as to others. By informing them—as a rule of life—both of the will of God and of their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly. It also reveals to

them the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives. Therefore, when they examine themselves in the light of the law, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred of their sin, together with a clearer view of their need of Christ and the perfection of his obedience. The law is also useful to the regenerate because, by forbidding sin, it restrains their corruptions. By its threats it shows them what their sins deserve, and, although they are free from the curse threatened in the law, it shows the afflictions that they may expect because of them in this life. The promises of the law likewise show to the regenerate God's approval of obedience and the blessings they may expect as they obey the law, although these blessings are not due to them by the law as a covenant of works. Therefore, the fact that a man does good rather than evil because the law encourages good and discourages evil is no evidence that the man is under the law rather than under grace. ROM 6:14; GAL 2:16; 3:13; 4:4, 5; ACT 13:39; ROM 8:1; ROM 7:12 -25; PSA 119:4-6; 1CO 7:19; GAL 5:14-23; ROM 7:7; ROM 3:20; JAM 1:23-25; ROM 7:9-24; GAL 3:24-25; ROM 8:3,4; JAM 2:11; PSA 119:101,104,128; EZR 9:13, 14; PSA 89:30-34; LEV 26; 2CO 6:16 ; PH 6:2; PSA 37:11; MAT 5:5; PSA 19:11; GAL 2:16; LUK 17:10; ROM 6:12-14; 1PE 3:8-16; HEB 12:28,29

7. These uses of the law do not conflict with the grace of the gospel, but are in complete harmony with it; for it is the Spirit of Christ who subdues and enables the will of man to do freely and cheerfully those things which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires. GAL 3:21; EZE 36:27; HEB 8:10; JER 31:33

To see the Scripture references stated for each point, please see:

http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/

Items 1-2 describe the moral law, item 3 describes the ceremonial law, and item 4 describes the civil law. Items 5-7 tell us how those laws apply to today. You will note that according to the WCF, only the moral law has any application to believers in this era of redemptive history; the civil and ceremonial aspects being fulfilled and abrogated by Christ.

While I believe that we can see a 3-fold division in the law in that there are regulations that are *primarily* moral, ceremonial, and civil in nature, that division must not be pressed too far. We must note that Scripture itself never divides the Law of Moses into parts, but simply refers to it as the "Law," the "Law of Moses" or some other similar designation. In other words, while we may see different kinds of laws that relate primarily to moral circumstances (i.e., don't steal), ceremonial (i.e., clean vs. unclean, various acts that had to be performed such as circumcision, sacrifices, etc.), and civil (rules that regulated the daily affairs of Israel), those different kinds of laws form *one complete law*, and it is that one law, the whole of it, that Christ came not to abolish, but to fulfill and has in fact fulfilled.

Basically, what the WCF shows us here is the redemptive historical progression of revelation found in the Scripture, culminating in the finished work of Christ. One will notice that the WCF strongly emphasizes that the civil and ceremonial aspects of the law are no longer binding (see items 3 and 4). Those aspects clearly have no application to God's people today due to the sacrifice of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom. A more complex issue however is how precisely the moral law applies. The WCF is careful to state that the moral law still binds all people today, and that Christ greatly strengthened it. It is equally important however to recognize that Christ perfectly complied with all of the stipulations of the moral aspects of the law, and it is His perfect obedience to the law that is now credited to the account of everyone who trusts in Christ alone for their salvation.

The WCF has proven itself to be extremely helpful in describing the law and it uses, etc., however, there is still more we can say to come to a more full-orbed understanding of the Old Testament law and its place in the redemptive historical progression. Building on the WCF, many have taken in hand to try and explain precisely how the totality of the law, to include the moral law as contained in the 10 Commandments, is to be understood in light of redemptive history. An excellent overview of this topic comes from Rev. Robert Lotzer, Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Abilene TX (this happens to be my home church). In an article entitled [How Does the Christian Relate to the Law of Moses?](http://www.covopc.org/Christian_Moses.html) (http://www.covopc.org/Christian_Moses.html), Pastor Lotzer builds upon the understanding set forth in the WCF, and draws out even further (and maybe a bit more clearly) the redemptive-historical nature of the Old Covenant/Law, and how precisely it applies today. Here are some key points that Rev. Lotzer sets forth for a New Covenant understanding of the Old Covenant Law (Note: This article should really be read in its entirety to capture the full thrust of Rev. Lotzer's argumentation):

1. The law is a unique, historical covenant given to Israel as a nation. Rev Lotzer states:

“Paul does not speak of the law as a set of timeless, abstract commandments that can be applied to all peoples but rather as a redemptive historical covenant (Mosaic covenant), which functioned to govern the life of theocratic Israel in a typological republication of the covenant of works relating to temporal blessings and curses in the land of Canaan. This is how the Old Testament itself speaks of the law.” (Ex. 34:27-28; Deut. 4:12-13; 5:1-3; 9:7-11, 15; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 10:11-18)

2. The law is a unified whole. Rev Lotzer states:

“Paul sees the law as a unified whole in which all the specific laws given in Genesis through Deuteronomy make up “the *one* law of Moses” given uniquely to Israel...When an Israelite, like Paul, heard or used the term “the law” he only thought of “the one law/legal code” given as a covenant to the nation (Ex. 34:27-28; Lev. 19; Deut. 4:12-13; 5:1-3; 9:7-11, 15; Deut. 28:1-2, 15; Jer. 31:31-34; Matt. 5:17-19; 23:23; Gal. 5:2-3; Heb. 10:11-18; James

2:10). [in an end note here, Rev Lotzer adds: *“In those rare cases where Paul refers to the believer as having a law that is normative to him, Paul always qualifies that law by adding “of Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2), to distinguish both the content and nature of the law of Christ from the law of Moses.”*] Therefore, to require the believer to keep even one law as handed to us directly by Moses would then require the believer to keep the whole law and therefore deny that Christ has come to fulfill the law for us (cf. Gal. 5:3).

3. The law as a legal covenant. Pastor Lotzer states:

“Paul sees the law as a “legal” covenant which is binding upon the whole nation of Israel to be kept perfectly in order to receive God’s blessing, or the “promise of life,” and if broken, to be cursed by God (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:4; Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10). This law held out the promise of life to Israel for those who actually accomplished the laws demands (Matt. 19:17; Mk. 10:17-18; Lk. 18:18-19; Rom. 2:13; 7:10; 10:5; Gal. 3:12; cf. Lev. 18:5).

However, the law, though good and holy (Lev. 11:45; Rom. 7:12-14, 16), could not produce the fruit of righteousness because of the weakness of Israel’s (and by extension all men in general) flesh (Acts 13:39; 15:10; Rom. 2:13; 3:20, 28; 7:4-5; 8:1-4; Gal. 2:21; 3:2-12, 21; Eph. 2:14-15; Heb. 7:18; 10:1-14) and therefore, the law became a curse and a ministry unto death and condemnation (Rom. 3:19-26; 4:15; 7:4-6, 23; 8:2-4; 2 Cor. 3:1-18; Gal. 3:6-9, 13-14, 23; 4:7; Col. 2:14). The purpose of the law, though certainly given to reveal God’s holy character to Israel, ultimately was to awaken and intensify Israel’s awareness of sin (Rom. 5:20; 7:7-12; Gal. 3:19-20, 23) and therefore to drive them to Christ (Gal. 3:24) so that when Christ came the law itself, having fulfilled its purpose and upon reaching its goal (Rom. 10:4; Matt. 5:17-19), passed away (Gal. 3:25; Rom. 6:14-15; 1 Cor. 9:20).”

Without keeping these things in mind (i.e., the nature of the covenants and the law) and actually applying these principles, we simply cannot make sense of the totality of Scripture, and these things are crucial to understanding the texts that our friend sent. Every concern she has presented has to do with the Old Covenant Law and its application, and every one of those passages are in the context of a completely different era in redemptive history--an era that has come and gone. The redemptive historical context those passages are found is in the context of the theocratic kingdom of Israel. As we have seen above, this means our friend is laboring under a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of both the Old Covenant and New Covenant, and is simply unaware of the redemptive-historical nature of the Scriptures. That stated, let’s take a look at the passages our friend has sent:

Dear President Bush:

Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's Law. I have learned a great deal from you, and try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When someone tries to defend the homosexual lifestyle, for example, I simply remind them that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination... End of debate. I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some other elements of God's Laws and how to follow them...

-- Couple of things here:

1. George Bush never said, to my knowledge, that it was his duty to educate people regarding God's Law. George Bush has merely demonstrated that he believes in such as things as right and wrong, and he, unlike many today, has established the fact that he has an objective standard that stands outside and above us to tell us why he thinks one thing is right, and another wrong.

One may find it strange that I say that Mr. Bush believes in right and wrong, as if an unbeliever does not believe in those things. In the final analysis, the unbeliever doesn't believe in right and wrong, because such things as right and wrong (i.e., morals/ethics) presuppose the existence of an absolute standard and truth that all are bound to obey. The unbeliever attempts to wax eloquent on morals and ethics, but then can't tell us why one thing is right and another is wrong, nor why anyone should be concerned about morals or ethics, or even justice for that matter. All they have is their *subjective* opinion and preference. The unbeliever says something is right or wrong simply because they say it is, and end up exalting *themselves* as the ultimate authority as to what is right and wrong. If you asked them *why* something is right or wrong, the only answer that they could logically give would be, "well, I just think that it is..."

Some may say that society determines right and wrong. But, how does society know what is right and wrong? Do we just take a majority vote? What if the majority voted that it was okay to systematically murder a whole group of innocent people by rounding them up, putting them in concentration camps, and then gassing them to death? Who's to say that that is wrong? In other words, one *can* point to society and its legal system and laws as the standard that we all ought to follow, but the question is how do we know that those laws are *right*? The abortion debate serves as a prime example. One side appeals to a woman's right to choose (yet can't tell us where that "right" came from!), while the other side appeals to the right to life and points to clear objective truth and standards as the basis upon which they make their appeal. Or, take the homosexual issue. One group says homosexual behavior is wrong, the other says it is right. How do we determine the truth of the matter? Again, the group who denies that there is an objective standard of right and wrong has no basis upon which to offer a response. All they can appeal to is their collective opinion; how they *think* it *should* be...how they "*feel*" it ought to be. And what are we to make of different societies? If one society is communistic and does not believe in individual rights and personal freedom, and the other is a republic, which does believe in individual rights and personal freedom, how do we determine which one is right and the other is wrong? If one society feels it is acceptable to fly planes into buildings to kill innocent people, and the other doesn't, who's to say who is right or wrong?

Personal preference or a majority vote then are completely inadequate for determining right and wrong, and eventually lead to chaos (to say the very least). It is to embrace the concept that there is no ultimate and objective truth. The great irony for people who believe this though is that if that is the case, then the entire foundation that this country was founded upon collapses. You see; we cannot even have such as things inalienable rights, because those only exist by virtue of their having a sufficient objective basis that ensures their existence. When we speak of inalienable rights, we are speaking of those things that are absolute. But if there aren't any absolutes, if all things are "relative," then we are no longer endowed by our "Creator" with those rights because there would be no "Creator," and if there is no Creator, then inalienable rights are impossible. And it is not merely enough to speak of a "Creator." We must discover who the Creator is and what the principles of right and wrong *are* that He established. This is what the founding fathers of this country understood and did. Granted, not all of them were Christians, and this country was *not* established as a Christian nation per se, however, they were all heavily influenced by Judeo-Christian values, and it was to those absolute and objective values that they all appealed, even the non-Christian founders (which were in the vast minority by the way). For more info on the philosophical underpinnings of the founding fathers, please see <http://www.wallbuilders.com/>

So what do we have today? A country dominated by a world-view that has no belief in an absolute truth, and therefore, is incapable of realizing the American dream spelled out in the Declaration of Independence. Because of our denial of objective truth, life is ultimately meaningless, liberty is void of the responsibility to do that which is right, and the pursuit of happiness is nothing more than a "*if it feels good, then do it*" futile endeavor. Not only is our country incapable of realizing the American dream, it has actually become hostile toward it because it rejects the only sufficient basis upon which the dream has any hope of ever being realized: God and His Word.

All George Bush has done then is simply pointed to the moral authority that served as the very moral authority and foundation for this country: God and His Word. And he is just being logically consistent in that he actually has a sufficient basis upon which to determine right and wrong, other than his mere personal opinion, or a CNN poll. President Bush, and others like him do not have the temerity to say one thing is right and another is wrong merely because they say so, or that's how they "feel" it should be. They appeal rather to an authority much greater than themselves. They say, "*this is right or wrong because the Creator of the universe, who is the only moral law-giver of the universe, has told us what is right and wrong...*"

Let me summarize and recap this critical point. The unbeliever has no basis upon which to say anything is right or wrong, *unless* they *borrow* from the Christian worldview, in which case they would be in agreement with the President and the founding fathers of this country. As stated above, as soon as you get into issues of right and wrong, you are getting into the area of objective truth. The only way to account for objective truth is to presuppose the existence of God who is Himself the truth, and then informs us of what is true. When people disagree over what is true, or what is moral or immoral behavior, the question is, who says? Why should we believe what one person says is moral or immoral? Is what is moral determined by individual personal preference or taking a majority vote? Or, is there some absolute standard of right and wrong that is above and outside of us (humanity) upon which we have a foundation to determine what is actually right and wrong? When we move from the only sure foundation for absolute truth and morals, we are left with nothing but preference and/or personal opinion. "Truth" and

morality are then determined by what is practical, or what seems right, or what feels good, and morality and even justice itself is rendered meaningless (and in point of fact, any kind of assertion is meaningless, because in order to assert something, you must believe that the thing you are asserting is true, but if there is no objective truth, which can only be accounted for by presupposing the existence of God, then all assertions are inherently meaningless).

One might think that only a Christian could come to such conclusions. That would be a thoroughly incorrect analysis. The great thinkers throughout human history have understood these things, and the most fundamental and basic presupposition that reigned supreme in the history of philosophical thought was that there was indeed an Unmoved Mover (Aristotle's term), a First Cause, an Eternal being who was personal, all powerful, and self-existent. Theology (the study and knowledge of God) was in fact hailed as the "Queen of the Sciences."

It wasn't until the Enlightenment that those basic presuppositions were seriously challenged. The most powerful challenge came from the agnostic philosopher of the 18th century Immanuel Kant. Yet even Kant recognized that without first presupposing the existence of God, ethics would be meaningless. We would never be able to tell anyone that they "ought" to do or not do something. Even though an agnostic, Kant then provided us with his moral argument for the existence of God. Basically, it goes like this:

- * We all have a sense of right and wrong and moral duty (ought-ness)
- * This sense of ought-ness is universal (everyone has it). For our sense of "ought-ness" (ethics) to be meaningful, and for there to be any grounds for ethics, there must be justice.
- * For there to be any grounds for justice, there must be the following conditions:
 - Life after death...we must survive the grave so that injustice can be paid for.
 - A Judge. The Judge must possess the following attributes for justice to occur:
 - Holy and Righteous...morally pure...is "just" 100% of the time.
 - Omniscient...must know every single detail of the events.
- * This ensures a perfect verdict. Does it ensure justice? No. The Judge must also be:
 - Omnipotent...
 - This ensures that He is *able* to carry out the sentence!

According to Kant then, these are the necessary conditions that must exist for ultimate justice to take place. If we are to make sense of ethics and morality then, ultimate justice is absolutely necessary. We *must* survive the grave, and there must be the type of personal Being described above that exists; the type of Being we are introduced to *only* in Christianity. Kant stopped short of saying that this proved the existence of God. What he demonstrated was that ethics and justice are meaningless *without* God, and then he reasoned that we must live "as if" there were a God. It should be noted though that Kant has described for us not just any God, but I would argue that the God he had in mind was the God of the Bible in light of the attributes that he ascribes to the "judge" of the universe.

In the final analysis, when the unbeliever says that the Bible shouldn't be followed, or that that Bible is wrong, etc., but doesn't have an objective source to determine what is right or wrong (i.e., God), the only thing they can appeal to is their own personal opinion, and in such a case, his statements ultimately have no meaning, because in order for an "opinion" to be *valid*, it

must correspond to reality, and to correspond to reality, it must conform to and confirm what is *objectively* true. They have no objective source outside of themselves to point to in making any claims of right and wrong, and since that is the case, right and wrong have no meaning, and since it has no meaning, then what they say about the Bible, or anything else for that matter, is meaningless. **They must then acknowledge the existence of God in order to deny His existence.**

2. Please note that our friend is not saying that the Bible is not the Word of God, nor that God's Law is not true, nor that it is wrong, etc., but is actually implicitly affirming that God's Word/Law is true, and that it *ought* to be followed. The questions posed to us by our friend have to do with *how* to follow (apply) these texts to our lives *today*, not that they are wrong, etc. To this we are indebted to our friend, because these texts are in the Bible, and it is clear that a great deal of misunderstanding can (and has) come about as related to them.

3. As for their application, as mentioned earlier, we should note that the passages our friend has questions about all relate to the Old Covenant Law (and even more to the point, the civil and ceremonial aspects of the Law), which we have already established were given to the nation of Israel and had application to that nation, and the totality of that law finds its fulfillment in Christ and the New Testament, where we have entered into a new epoch of redemptive history, and the new has replaced the old (ref Hebrews chapters 8 and 9). With this in mind, I will nevertheless provide a brief answer to each one.

1. Leviticus 25:44 states that I may possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighboring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can't I own Canadians?

-- We must ask, what is the context of the passage? Again, it is the theocratic kingdom of Israel that existed 3,000 years ago. If we apply the traditional 3-fold distinction of the law, this is part of the *civil law*. To quote the WCF, "To the people of Israel, *as a civil entity*, He also gave various judicial laws *which expired at the time their State expired. Therefore, these judicial laws place no obligation upon anyone now...*" What our friend has done here is taken a text out of its intended redemptive historical and cultural context, and is making an *incorrect application*. This is in fact the ultimate answer to all of the questions posed, but I will address other issues related to the other questions as well. As for the issue of slavery found in this question (and the next one), I refer the reader to the following links. I have listed them in the order that I think they should be read:

<http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/questions/answer.php?catagory=bible&folder=slavery&topic=Slavery&file=slavery.xml> (a brief intro into the discussion).

<http://www.wallbuilders.com/resources/search/detail.php?ResourceID=94> (this article is a fantastic look at the Bible, slavery, and the founding fathers of the U.S.)

<http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/ds/q1109/> (excellent and concise pamphlet that can be read online).

<http://www.christian-thinktank.com/qnoslave.html> (very long and detailed; leaves no stone unturned. Note: the author uses some acronyms, and provides a link at the bottom of the page

that describes each one. The most prevalent acronym in this article is ANE, which refers to Ancient Near East).

2. I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?

-- Notice, our friend first of all acknowledges a willingness to comply with this provision stated in the law (and even says she would like to do it!). As a believer, I can only admire such uncompromising devotion and abandonment to God's law and the various provisions in it that our friend has articulated here.

Secondly, one should note that this was *not* a command, but something *provided for* in the civil aspect of the law for various reasons. The Israelite father who found himself in this particular era of redemptive history (theocratic Israel 3,000 years ago), as head of the household, could use this provision, however it should be noted that the daughter in such a situation was placed under protection of the law (see Ex 21:8-11). Thus, the Wycliffe Commentary notes,

“[the father] was not selling her into cruel bondage, but sending her into a household where she would be as well treated as at home.” (from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1962 by Moody Press).

In our modern world, this serves as a striking parallel to our practice of adoption.

Thirdly, our friend is laboring under a false application of the Scriptures and fails to understand the redemptive historical context of this passage. Ironically however, she hits on the key point of what I have been saying throughout, when she says, *“in this day and age...”* Those words say it all! What day and age are we in now? With the advent of Christ and the New Testament, we are in a completely new “day and age.” The text in question has a redemptive historical and cultural context, and that context is the theocratic nation of Israel that existed 3,000 years ago, which is obviously a completely different “day and age.” See the WCF once again and the comments from Rev. Lotzer above.

3. I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of menstrual uncleanness - Lev.15: 19-24. The problem is how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.

-- First, let God be true, and every man a liar. The reason for doing or not doing something shouldn't be predicated on a fear of offending a mere human being, but on the fear of offending a Holy and Sovereign God.

Second, and once again, this was a ceremonial stipulation that was given for a specific purpose at a specific time. Two things need to be observed in regard to the regulation:

1. Ceremonial Cleanliness – the context of the passages in question relate to the concept of ceremonial cleanliness. What that means is that God put certain restrictions on those

who would enter His presence. He lists many things that would make a person “unclean” and unable to enter the sanctuary. Everything from various bodily discharges of men, to the various things we might touch, to the monthly bleeding of the woman, would make one unclean (our friend here has only listed *one* example). Thus, primarily what is in view is an issue of holiness. In order to be ceremonially clean, things had to be purified, because nothing impure can ever approach the presence of an absolutely holy God.

Some might be concerned that a few of the things on the list that would make one unclean are things that people can’t help, such as the women’s menstrual bleeding, or various other bodily discharges from men, etc. One of the lessons God is teaching us is that all of those things are really the result of the fallen world we live in. In other words, because of the sin of our first parents (Adam and Eve), we suffer all kinds of less than perfect conditions, and I can’t think of a woman in her right mind that would say that they actually find that their “period” represents the best of conditions. It is just another painful and unpleasant visual reminder that we live in a fallen world that is marked by sickness, disease, imperfection, death, pain, decay, sorrow and tears. In Christ though we are made holy and clean, and He is our holiness and our ceremonially “cleanness.”

2. Physical Health Considerations – The New Bible Dictionary, Second Edition (Tyndale, 1982, p. 215), notes:

“Bodily cleanliness was esteemed highly and practiced in the Bible lands...Egyptian priests bathed twice each day and twice each night. In Israel physical cleanness rendered a [person] ready to approach God...”

The point here is the high premium that was placed on personal cleanliness and hygiene, and for those in Israel, how that served as an outward sign of the need to be ceremonially clean to approach the Great I AM, the Holy God of the universe. In terms of just physical health and hygiene however, and given the living conditions 3,000 years ago, especially the people of Israel living in the wilderness as they were at the time the law was given, this stipulation may have also served to help optimize the health of women, and possibly even helped in the prevention of disease for both men and women. One of the first lines of defense a person had back then (and even today) in combating sickness and disease is personal hygiene. Disease spreads quickly, and one can only imagine the devastating effects that it could have on a community living under harsh wilderness conditions. Today people are admonished to wear condoms to help prevent or stop the spread of disease, and that is in light of even ideal living conditions. Here, God says to abstain during this particular time of the month. The direct reason is an issue of ceremonially cleanliness, but in terms of practical considerations it seems eminently wise in terms of personal hygiene and health. Interestingly, a published study by Dr. Winnifred Cutler and of the Athena Institute for Women’s Wellness, Inc. in Chester Springs, PA and her colleagues shows that sexual interaction during menstruation is associated with heavier bleeding patterns and other health problems for women (see <http://www.athenainstitute.com/prsexme.html> for more info).

In summing up Leviticus Chap 15, Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown wrote in their commentary (published in 1871):

“The divine wisdom was manifested in inspiring the Israelites with a profound reverence for holy things; and nothing was more suited to this purpose than to debar from the tabernacle all who were polluted by any kind of uncleanness, ceremonial as well as natural, mental as well as physical. The better to mark out that people as His family, His servants and priests, dwelling in the camp as in a holy place, consecrated by His presence and His tabernacle, He required of them complete purity, and did not allow them to come before Him when defiled, even by involuntary or secret impurities, as a want of respect due to His majesty. And when we bear in mind that God was training a people to live in His presence in some measure as priests devoted to His service, we shall not consider these rules for the maintenance of personal purity either too stringent or too minute (small/trivial)...”

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/JamiesonFaussetBrown/jfb.cgi?book=le&chapter=015>

4. When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord - Lev.1:9. The problem is, my neighbors. They claim the odor is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them?

-- It is great to have a zeal for God and endeavor to obey Him, however, our zeal must be, as the Scripture says, according to knowledge (Rom 10:2), and to do that we must read further than the Old Testament! We can now rejoice in the fact that all of those sacrifices mentioned in the Old Covenant that was given to Israel over 3,000 years ago in the wilderness have been abolished forever by the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ (Heb 9:11-28)! My dear friend, if you are burning a bull on an altar as a sacrifice, not only would the odor be displeasing to your neighbor, but it would also be displeasing to God (as a side note, again, even if those sacrifices were still applicable today, why would one fear offending their neighbor more than offending God? Also, this was a function that could only be performed by the priests at the tabernacle, so the point is mute on those grounds as well). Also, with reference to that Old Covenant practice, no one was ever smitten merely for claiming that the odor of the sacrifice had displeased them.

5. I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself, or should I ask the police to do it?

-- Fortunately, Jesus fulfilled this as well, and bore the death penalty that disobedience to God's Law required. In terms of the death penalty for various laws described in the Old Covenant, one must understand at least 2 key things:

1. God is demonstrating His absolute holiness and justice. People often say they want God to deal with them *justly*. God has graciously done so, which means that He

shows us what His moral demands are, and what the consequences are if we disobey: death. God doesn't stop there though. He then comes to us in the Person of Christ, who obeys the law perfectly where we fail, and then bears the full penalty that breaking God's law required. As the Apostle Paul would write, quoting the Old Covenant, "*Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things in the law to do them...*" (Gal 3:10, a reference to Deut 27:26) and "*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law having become a curse for us...*" (Gal 3:13) The bottom line is that every single person has to deal with God's justice and all that it entails. Either we are going to face it on the basis of our own works, or we are going to face it on the basis of Christ's work. If we face it on the basis of our own works, we will die. If we face it on the basis of Christ's work, we will live, because Christ obeyed the Law perfectly at all points where we failed at all points, and has paid the penalty our sins deserved and absorbed the justice of God that we never could by willingly laying down His life on the cross.

2. In terms of the Sabbath, notice that it is one of the commandments that relates specifically to our relationship with God. It was the one-day in seven that we were to consecrate ourselves completely to God, and we couldn't even do that! In the context of Old Covenant Israel, who had been delivered powerfully by God from the bondage of Egypt, this was surely the least that they could do. But, low and behold, they couldn't even keep that command, even at the threat of the penalty of death (by the way, we are no better today. Israel's rebellious ways simply serve as a microcosmic snapshot of humanity as a whole).

As for the death penalty, as far as I have been able to tell in my studies, the death penalty was always sanctioned and/or administered by the covenant community as a whole, not a single individual.

Finally, the civil aspect of this law was abrogated with the demise of the theocratic kingdom of Israel and the advent of Christ and the New Covenant. In the New Covenant we discover that Christ Himself *is* our Sabbath, meaning that we cease from trying to justify ourselves before God on the basis of our own works and we enter into eternal life/rest (see Hebrews 4). Not only that, but we can also find here an instance where the law in the Old Covenant is actually intensified in the New. Whereas in the Old Covenant, there was one day in seven that was set aside for absolute consecration to God, in the New we discover that we are to offer ourselves in full consecration *daily*, 7 days in 7 days (Rom 12:1-3). In other words, in a very real and profound sense, every day is a "Sabbath" day!

6. A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination - Lev. 11:10, it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this? Are there 'degrees' of abomination?

-- Yes, there are degrees of "abomination." Even in human justice systems we distinguish between more offensive crimes. For example, stealing a piece of gum is less of an offense than murdering a person, and our legal system reflects that fact. We even distinguish between 1st degree, 2d degree, and 3d degree murder (<http://www.wordiq.com/definition/Murder>). The same principle holds true for God's Law (as a matter of fact, our entire legal system is based upon the Judeo-Christian principles of Law).

Now, we must say that all sin, in the final analysis, could rightly be termed an abomination. However, the Creator of the universe has termed certain sins to be more offensive than others, and as such has affixed the term “abomination” to them. As far as homosexuality goes, we should be quick to point out that God condemns all forms of sexual sin, both hetero and homosexual. This also calls attention to the fact that what we are dealing with in terms of homosexuality is *behavior*, not *ontology*. In other words, a person isn’t born a homosexual. At the end of the day, people are only born male or female, and as men or women they engage in either homosexual or heterosexual behavior. The kind of sexual behavior condoned by the Creator is heterosexual in the context of marriage.

Not only is homosexual behavior prohibited by the Creator, it is also rejected by nature itself. I do not mean to suggest that “nature” is a personal entity. What I mean is that there is a natural “law”, if you will, that simply rejects anything that goes contrary to it. In nature we see a finely tuned machine, and anything that runs counter to it and is harmful to it is rejected by it. We see this in everything, from biology to ecology. In terms of homosexual behavior, the male body and the female body, *by design*, were intended for heterosexual behavior, not homosexual, and when that natural order of things is violated, great harm can and does occur to the individual (both physical and emotional). These links touch on some of the harmful affects of homosexual behavior, and its impact on the family:

<http://www.cathfam.org/Hitems/ShortLife.html>

<http://www.frc.org/get/is01j3.cfm>

The Apostle Paul’s language is very interesting as it relates to what I’m saying here. In Romans 1:24-27 he says,

“Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged *natural* relations for *unnatural* ones. In the same way the men also abandoned *natural* relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.”
(from the New International Version, emphasis mine)

Note the words “natural” and “unnatural.” In other words, it is a *self-evident truth that homosexuality is wrong by the very nature of things*. For more info on this topic, see http://www.exodus-international.org/library_Society.shtml

In terms of shellfish, well again it is an issue of cleanliness. The New Bible Dictionary notes that, “*both shellfish and crustaceans can easily cause food poisoning and may also carry disease...*” (p.216). So again, in the context of a communal people 3,000 years ago, we can only marvel at the wisdom of such a command. A similar example is in the practice of circumcision. Not only was circumcision an outward sign of the covenant and consecration to God, but it also

has health benefits (this is indicative of most of the laws given). The New England Journal of Medicine notes,

“Male circumcision is associated with a reduced risk of penile HPV infection and, in the case of men with a history of multiple sexual partners, a reduced risk of cervical cancer in their current female partners.”

(<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/abstract/346/15/1105>)

See here as well: http://nd.essortment.com/circumcisionunc_rmdj.htm

7. Lev. 21:20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/20, or is there some wiggle-room here?

-- Sorry, no wiggle room. Our perfect God requires absolute perfection, and thankfully He sent forth His perfect Son, as a lamb without blemish, to make a way to God’s altar. Now the call goes out to whosoever, whether they are Jew, Gentile, male, female, “slave”, free, crippled or lame, anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, that is, have full access to the altar/throne of God. Also, as a side note, the particular passage in question has specific reference to the Aaronic priesthood. This was a *priestly* regulation. Only the priest could approach the altar, and as such had to be “without blemish.” This serves as a shadow of what Christ would fulfill. Christ is our perfect High Priest, and our Lamb without blemish, and it is through our perfect Priest (Christ), our Lamb without blemish, that we who are imperfect and riddled with blemishes are able to have access to the throne of grace, being declared “blemish free” by virtue of having the perfect righteousness (the “blemish-less-ness”) of our perfect High Priest imputed to us (Rom 4, 5, Eph 5:27; 1 Pet 1:13-21; Heb 7:20-28; Heb 9:11-28). The Puritan Bible commentator of the 17th century, Matthew Henry, summarizes the principle here in light of the New Covenant:

As these priests were types of Christ, so all ministers must be followers of him, that their example may teach others to imitate the Saviour. Without blemish, and separate from sinners, He executed his priestly office on earth. What manner of persons then should his ministers be! But all are, if Christians, spiritual priests; the minister especially is called to set a good example, that the people may follow it. Our bodily infirmities, blessed be God, cannot now shut us out from his service, from these privileges, or from his heavenly glory. Many a healthful, beautiful soul is lodged in a feeble, deformed body. And those who may not be suited for the work of the ministry, may serve God with comfort in other duties in his church.

(<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/MatthewHenryConcise/mhc-con.cgi?book=le&chapter=021>)

8. Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Lev. 19:27. How should they die?

-- I'm not sure if the death penalty was prescribed or not for that—the Scripture makes no mention of the consequence. If it were then it would have most probably been by stoning. As a note as to why specifically this command was given, once again it was an issue of holiness and separation. God was reinforcing the difference between Himself and the pagan gods of the land of Canaan, and separating His people from the peoples around them. Thus, this was a powerful outward sign of separation and consecration to God. Many of the practices prohibited, like this one, find a direct contrast to the practices of the Canaanites, who besides sacrificing their children to fire (which precipitated God's righteous judgment against them), would also shave around their temples and foreheads as a religious sign of mourning (see Deuteronomy 14:1, NIV Study Bible commentary note). Thus, God is emphasizing the difference between Him and their gods, His people and their people, and forbids them to shave the sides of their head and the forehead, etc. The Wycliffe Bible Commentary informs us:

“An ancient Arab religious custom required that the hair and beard be trimmed in such manner. The prohibition of the custom was necessary if the Jews were to be distinguished from the heathen”
(from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database.
Copyright © 1962 by Moody Press)

Once again, this is found in the redemptive historical context of theocratic Israel. Christ has freed us from these stipulations by fulfilling the law perfectly. As a side note, Orthodox Jews still comply with this. Skeptics who mock this regulation need to be careful, because in doing so, they could be accused of engaging in a form of anti-Semitism. Most skeptics I know certainly wouldn't want that label attached to them.

9. I know from Lev. 11:6-8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, but may I still play football if I wear gloves?

-- Fortunately, in Christ we are made clean, and there is nothing that can make us “unclean.” So, no, gloves are not necessary, but if it is cold, may be a wise option. And feel free to chow down on those plump hot dogs and sausages—you may not be “ceremonially” unclean as a result, but you may definitely feel a bit unclean (i.e., sick)! ☺ I again point our friend to the redemptive historical context of the passage, and she may want to read Acts 10 with Matthew 15 as well.

10. My uncle has a farm. He violates Lev. 19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton/polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them? - Lev. 24:10-16. Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair, as we do with people who sleep with their in-laws? (Lev. 20:14)

-- I'm glad to see that you would be so willing to implement even the most difficult of God's Laws. Rarely have I heard someone so eager to embrace the capital punishment as set forth in the Old Covenant. As for your uncle and his wife, I suppose they can rejoice in the fact

that they do not live in the theocratic kingdom of Israel of 3000 years ago. As for why that particular command was given at the time, again, it was an object lesson for the Jews on purity and separation. The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible (Edited by Walter Elwell, 1989, Baker Books) states:

“A number of miscellaneous instructions in verses 19-37 relate in some way to each of the commandments. Two kinds of seed must not be sown in the same field, different animals are not to be mated, and clothing of two different kinds of materials must not be worn (v.19). *Israel is a nation separated to the Lord, and the principle of separation extends even to these areas of life.*” (p.79, emphasis mine)

Our object lesson now though for purity and separation is the Risen Christ, who perfectly fulfilled *all* of the Mosaic Law, and bore the death penalty that you, your uncle, his wife, and me, would otherwise have to. As for private executions, as far as I’m aware (I could be wrong) that was never an option—to my knowledge, capital punishment was always carried out in public. As for why God would impose the death penalty for such things and in such a manner, I suppose you can take that up with Him. Since God is the Law-Giver and Creator of the universe, He certainly reserves the right to impose whatever laws, sanctions, and consequences He so desires. He is the potter and we are the clay, and, as the Apostle Paul tells us, “But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?” (Rom 9:20). Fundamentally though, what we will discover, is that the ultimate reason for the detailed laws and severe consequences for their violation is that God directly taught Israel (and the whole world thereafter) what it means when we say God is “holy” and “just”.

Everyone who wishes to believe in God, all want a God who is the epitome of holiness and justice (as well as other attributes such as wisdom, love, goodness, omnipotence, omniscience, etc.). Everyone wants a God that is perfect. The God of the Bible shows us precisely what that looks like. The problem is, we just don’t like it. If one claims that their “god” is holy, yet this “god” allows those who have repeatedly broken His laws to enter into His presence without having been punished for their lawbreaking, then bottom-line, that “god” is neither holy nor perfect. How can imperfection ever stand in the presence of absolute perfection on the basis of imperfection?! The one true and living God reveals to us the perfection of His nature and holiness, and is never inconsistent: He requires lawbreakers to be punished, and requires absolute perfection as the basis upon which one can enter His presence. Fortunately for us, He doesn’t stop there though. He then comes to us in the person of His Son, born under the law. The second person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ, 100% God and 100% man, then perfectly obeys the law where we constantly disobey and break it. He then goes to cross to bear the wrath of an absolutely holy and perfect God against law-breakers even though He Himself never broke a law, rises from the grave for our justification, and ascends to Heaven where He ever lives to make intercession for His people. Now the call goes out to everyone with the promise that all those who trust in finished work of Christ alone will then have access to the presence of God, not on the basis of their own imperfection, but on the basis of the absolute perfection of Christ which is imputed to all those who trust in Him alone. As the hymn says, “On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand...”

As for the issue of capital punishment, the article at this link is an excellent overview:
<http://www.str.org/free/studies/capipuni.htm> see also <http://www.tektonics.org/cappun.html>.

Mr. President, I know you have studied these things extensively and thus enjoy considerable expertise in such matters, so I am confident you can help. Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.

-- Yes, God's Word is eternal and unchanging. God's Word was settled before time even began, and He chose to reveal it progressively through time culminating in the finished work of Christ, and as Jesus, the very Word of God manifested in flesh said, He came to fulfill the law and the prophets and establish His kingdom. Those of us who live in this day and age have the benefit of knowing the totality of that eternal and unchanging Word, whereas those who lived in Israel 3,000 years ago only saw a small portion of it. Now when we come to that eternal and unchanging Word, we must, as I have belabored throughout, keep in mind the redemptive-historical context of the passages we are reading, etc. This statement really sums this up well:

Throughout the history of God's revelation, what was present from the beginning progressively comes to light. Nothing new is "added," though different aspects of God's plan become evident which beforehand had been hidden. Revelation progresses in epochal installments or intrusions. The coming to light of that which was shrouded in previous revelation brings new responsibilities to the people of God. One cannot live in the light of full revelation and behave as one for whom that full revelation has not come. (http://www.two-age.org/beliefs_index/theology.htm)

As for the transition between Old Testament and New Testament that we see, Pastor Lotzer notes,

The very nature and quality of one particular period within redemptive history determines the level of God revealing his character through the law. One would assume that as God reveals a greater degree of his character at a later period in redemptive history (i.e. by making a "new" covenant) that the revelation of his holiness will increase in direct proportion to that greater revelation. Therefore, we should assume that when God perfectly reveals himself in Jesus Christ that in that revelation God (i.e. through a new covenant) will also reveal himself perfectly through his law. Even the prophets spoke of the new law (or torah) or Zion law (Isa. 2:3; 42:4; 51:4, 7; Mic. 4:2), which would come with the revelation of God's messiah.

Pastor Lotzer goes on to say:

“[Meredith] Kline goes on to point out that there is certainly continuity between these sub-canons [Old and New Testaments] within scripture. This is true because the same “organic spiritual-historical relationship” runs throughout the one canon of scripture. Both covenants are unfolding the same redemptive plan of God. Kline explains:

“They are, of course, indissolubly bound to one another in [an] organic spiritual-historical relationship. They both unfold the same principle of redemptive grace, moving forward to a common eternal goal in the city of God . . . According to the divine design the old is provisional and preparatory for the new, and by divine predisclosure the new is prophetically anticipated in the old. External event and institution in the old order were divinely fashioned to afford a systematic representation of the realities of the coming new order, so producing a type-antitype correlativity between the two covenants in which there unity is instructively articulated.” (Meredith Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Pub., 1972, second ed., 1989, rev. 1997), 95-96.

“This continuity is important because the Old Testament necessarily provides the “backdrop” for understanding man’s original purpose and his fallen condition that makes salvation in Christ necessary. The Old Testament pictures the original eschatological goal and promise made to man created in the image of God and that awful, fallen condition under Adam in types and shadows that will only clearly be understood once they have reached their consummation and fulfillment in Christ. But equally, once that fulfillment has been accomplished then the believer can go back to those types and shadows to gain a fuller understanding of the nature of the work of Christ.”

“But this continuity between the two covenants/canons also includes certain commandments (or “life-norms,” as Kline refers to them) that equally apply to all mankind throughout redemptive history. Kline says, “there are, of course, life-norms found in the Old Testament which continue to be authoritative standards of human conduct in New Testament times.” [19] There is no doubt that God’s eternal, moral law is expressed in similar ways throughout redemptive history and contained in each covenant document of the Old and New Testaments.”

“With this continuity in mind, we must also recognize the radical discontinuity between the two canons of the Old and New Testaments. When that which is provisional and preparatory finds

its fulfillment then a new covenant must be established to bring order and structure that is consistent to the nature of that new covenant community. Therefore, it makes sense that the Old Testament canon gave specific and unique “life-norms” or commandments to structure that specific covenant community (type) that do not carry over into a new covenant community (anti-type).”

I pray that this response proves beneficial to our friend in some small way. One point of irony here that I’m certain our friend did not intend is that by focusing on the Old Covenant Law and its rigorous demands, we are reminded very powerfully, and have cause to only glory even more, in the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ and all that Christ has done on our behalf. The Old Covenant reveals the nature of an absolutely Holy God, what absolute perfection requires, and our desperate need for a Savior. As the Apostle Paul says, the law then is our tutor to drive us to Christ (Galatians 3:23-25).

Now that we have dealt with these matters, I have a few questions that I would like to pose to those who may object to George Bush, or anyone else, when they make an appeal to the Bible to determine what is right and what is wrong. Please note, in answering these questions, the individual needs to:

- a. Provide the objective basis/standard upon which they can say that the things below are right or wrong; and
- b. Tell us why we should believe that the objective standard they point us to is true?:

1. Is worshipping a rock, tree, or some other “idol” objectively wrong? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. Is it wrong for people to just worship whatever God they want, or not worship any God at all? If so why? If not, why not?
3. Is worshipping the One True and Living God wrong? If so, why? If not, why not?
4. Is child pornography wrong? If so, why? If not, why not?
5. Is rape wrong? If so, why? If not, why not?
6. Is murder wrong? If so, why? If not, why not?
7. Should we honor our fathers and our mothers? If so, why? If not, why not?
8. Is stealing wrong? If so, why? If not, why not?
9. Is adultery wrong? If so, why? If not, why not?
10. Is lying wrong? Is so, why? If not, why not?
11. Should we love our neighbors as ourselves? If so, why? If not, why not?
12. Should we do unto others as we would have done unto us? If so, why? If not, why not?
13. Is homosexuality wrong? If so, why? If not, why not?
14. Was the holocaust wrong? If so, why? If not, why not?
15. Should everyone just do what is right in their own eyes? If so, why? If not, why not?
16. Is abortion on demand wrong? If so, why? If not, why not?
17. Should we be selfish or generous people? State reasons why or why not for each one
18. Is there such a thing as justice, and how do you know for certain that there is?
19. What is moral, and why should I believe what you say it is?

20. Do we exist? How do you know? How do you know that your existence, or the existence of anything, isn't just an illusion? If you say it is an illusion, who is having the illusion? How do you know that for sure?

Obviously, I could go on and on. I will stop here though. I think the point has been clearly established: for the individual(s) that reject God and His Word as the objective basis for determining what is right and what is wrong, they are thrown into a huge dilemma because they reject the only basis for discovering truth, and in turn can't provide us an objective basis upon which to determine anything, much less whether something is either right or wrong. All they are left with is their opinion, and as such they have no basis, and I would argue, no right then, to tell anyone that something is right or wrong, true or false, or good or evil. Thus, since they don't have any way to determine what is right and what is wrong, etc., I would greatly appreciate it if they did not tell us that we were wrong for appealing to the Scriptures (since in the final analysis they have no way of knowing such a thing). I would also appreciate it greatly if they would cease making any kind of assertion whatsoever, since assertions are statements of truth, and statements of truth presuppose an objective and absolute truth, which they, if they deny the God of the Bible, fundamentally reject. ***I guess in the final analysis, they have no other recourse then to simply keep altogether silent, for that is all they can do logically speaking.***

May we ever continue to give our great God and Savior never ending praise for all of His mighty works as we stand in awe of His holy, sovereign plan of redemption established before time even began, and see how He so marvelously has unfolded that redemptive plan in history and is bringing all things to their final redemptive consummation.

By His Sovereign Grace Alone,

John Orlando

2 July 2004